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# SPEECH

OF

GOVERNOR AND W. JOHNSON,

ON THE

RESTORATION OF STATE GOVERNMENT,

AT THE MEETING HELD IN THE HALL OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 21, 1864, TO TAKE  
INITIATORY STEPS TO RESTORE CIVIL  
GOVERNMENT IN TENNESSEE.

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# RESTORATION OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT.

## SPEECH OF GOVERNOR ANDREW JOHNSON.

AT THE MEETING HELD IN THE HALL OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 21, 1864, TO TAKE INITIATORY STEPS TO RESTORE CIVIL GOVERNMENT IN TENNESSEE.

FELLOW-CITIZENS: In responding to the call that has been made upon me, I do so not for the purpose of making a speech, but simply to enter into a conversation, as it were, upon the subjects brought to your consideration here to-night in the resolutions just adopted.

The time has come when we should begin to consider the true policy to be adopted. I know in making speeches it is easy to make a flourish of trumpets or a display of fireworks, and entertain an audience for a time, but at present we should be practical. Our business now is to commence the restoration of our State government, and if I understand the resolutions adopted to-night, I think they cover the whole ground.

Our object is to restore all the functions of State government. We have been involved, or, more properly, engaged, in a rebellion. Rebellions were anticipated by our forefathers, and their suppression provided for. And when a rebellion occurs it devolves upon the Government of the United States to suppress it. Admitting the functions of a State to be paralyzed for a time, it does not destroy the State, as has been very correctly remarked. In the progress of the rebellion, the governor of a State may fly to seek protection in foreign climes, the Legislature may disappear, the civil magistrates may cease to act, but that does not destroy the State. Its functions have only been paralyzed—its powers are only remaining inactive.

In the 4th section of the 4th Article of the Constitution we find that the United States shall guarantee to each State in this Union a republican form of government. Instead of petitioning the President or the Congress of the United States—instead of assuming the attitude of suppliants in reference to the restoration of the powers of State government, we stand in the attitude of demanding—claiming at the hands of the Federal Government the guarantee of a republican form of govern-

ment. We are no suppliants—no petitioners. We stand upon the broad platform of the Constitution, demanding our rights—that the guarantees in the Constitution shall be secured to us—that is, to secure to us a republican form of government.

We find also in the Constitution of the United States that the President is required to take an oath of office. He is sworn to support the Constitution of the United States. He is bound to see that the laws are faithfully executed, and he, in the exercise of his constitutional obligations, may appear in the State of Tennessee in the person of an agent—I care not by what name, either military Governor, agent, or commissioner—but he can appear through his agent, and restore to the people of Tennessee, and to every other State in the Union, a republican form of government. He has been sending brave men and gallant officers to suppress this rebellion, and for a time the functions of government in this State have been suspended, we have no Governor, no Legislature, and but few Judges—and we have one of these here to-night, (Judge M. M. Brion), who has been discharging his duties in obedience to the principles I have been describing.

But in beginning to restore the Government—in carrying out the obligations of the Constitution, preserving and guaranteeing to the people a republican form of government, we must have justices of the peace, constables, etc. There are many here, no doubt, to-night, who are not citizens of Tennessee. Those who are, are familiar with our regulations. For instance, our State is divided into counties, then civil districts, each one of which elects two magistrates and one constable. There are provisions and exceptions made for different towns to have additional justices of the peace and constables. We will say, by way of illustration, that the first Saturday in March has been the usual time for

the election of all county officers—justices of the peace, constables, trustees, sheriffs, clerks of the county and circuit courts—and when we come to the constitutional basis, would it not be clearly constitutional—would it not be carrying out the behests of the Constitution, and would the Executive be doing anything more than discharging his duty, to say to the people of this State on the first Saturday in March next: Go to the ballot-box and elect your constables, sheriffs, justices, county trustees and clerks. And when elected, let them be commissioned as they ordinarily are. The agent of the Government supplies the vacuum. Is there anything outside of the principles of the Constitution in that? Is there any usurpation in it? There must be a beginning somewhere.

In the absence of government there must be steps taken, though they may be irregular, for the purpose of bringing back order? Then we take a step without precedent, but clearly justifiable, and proceed to elect our officers as we have done heretofore. In looking over the various judicial districts of the State, we find them without judicial officers. In turning to the laws and Constitution of the State we find that when vacancies occur by death, resignation, or otherwise, the Executive shall make temporary appointments, and these appointees shall hold their places until their successors are elected and qualified. Then we see how easy the process is. Begin at the foundation, elect the lower officers, and, step by step, put the government in motion. But it may be said this can't be done in all the counties throughout the State. But, if it is done in a half dozen counties, it is so much done, and that much done we can do more.

In this connection there comes up a very important question, and that is, who shall be allowed to vote? This is the touchstone. And let us talk about this in a plain, common sense way, and see if we can ascertain who ought, and who ought not to vote. I assume that an individual who has engaged in this rebellion, who has got his consent to give up the government of the United States, and with his person attach his fortunes to the Southern Confederacy, or to any other Government—I say he has been, by his own act, *expatriated*—at the very point of time at which he gets his consent to take up arms against the Government of the United States, he ceases to be a citizen of the United States. [Applause.] A man coming into the United States from Great Britain, Ireland, or elsewhere, does not become a citizen until he has filed his declaration and taken the oath of allegiance. We describe in our laws the process by which he may become a citizen. Renouncing his allegiance to all

powers, kings and potentates, thus complying with our naturalization laws, he becomes a citizen of the United States. We know that a great many who went into this rebellion, went into it under a reign of terror; we know a great many were conscripted, a great many went from interest and speculation; and others—the intelligent portion—went into it for the purpose of changing the Government and establishing an Aristocracy or negro oligarchy. [Laughter.] This we know; and now shall we act upon the doctrine that a man can't repent, or, upon the Christian principle, that a man can conscientiously acknowledge his error and once more become a citizen of the United States? This is the question. Shall we lay down a rule which prohibits all restoration, and by which all will be excluded from participating in the exercise of the elective franchise? Think: we are told that honest men sometimes do change their opinions. We are told upon pretty high authority that sinners sometimes repent, and honestly repent; and we are told that in this repentance there should be works meet for repentance—that there should be some evidence of it. That is the condition of the community. We want to restore the Government, and the restoring process is that you, the people, must go to the ballot-box and exercise the elective franchise in so doing. Now let us get at it practically. These three gentlemen sitting here to-night—who are reporting, I presume, are judges of an election. We want to elect our squires, our constables, our county officers and our judges. I am speaking of things to be done before we get to convention, about which I have much to say before I conclude. What rule will you adopt, by which you can tell disloyal from loyal men? Over there I can point to a man who has been standing out like Saul of old, head and shoulders above the rest for the Union, as everybody knows. Over there stands another who has been equally prominent on the other side. Of these two we can say at once that the one may vote and the other may not. But in this instance we have got two extremes—we have got a case which everybody or anybody can decide without difficulty. But is the whole community in this condition? You may discriminate for a while—these are union men, these are rebels—but after a while you approach a line where they have not been prominent, and then how many can tell which is which? Will you have no test? No rule? Will you confer the power upon these judges, to say that no person shall vote save those that be loyal? But they cannot tell; they may act correctly as far as their judgment goes. Then again, in ad-<sup>uon</sup>



I tell you you are trusting a great deal, where you leave this matter to the discretion of judges. They may, in many instances, act right, and they may think they act right in all. Here sit the three judges; they look around the neighborhood and say: "Why, I do not like to discriminate in favor of one friend and against another—I hope he has done right, and if he has done wrong, I hope he has repented." Then what rule will you establish? We want some standard by which we can put he that has been a traitor to the test, though he has repented. Now what will it be? It is easy to talk that rebels shall not vote and Union men may, but it is difficult to practice this thing. What rule will you establish? I ask the question. I want information. I came up here to talk to you, and you to me.

I know it has been said by some Union men that we should not be placed in the attitude of culprits—of men asking for pardon. I do not feel that you, and you, should be required, for the sake of a vote, to ask for pardon. I am not a criminal—I have violated no law—I have not raised my arm against my government. Therefore, I do not want pardon. But in the election of officers who are to take charge of the government we want some test, at least, that the men who vote are loyal and will act with loyal men. In all the States of this Union there is a qualification attached to voters without regard to treason, traitors, or anything of the kind. And taking the State of Tennessee for an illustration, what is the qualification? We find that the person to vote must first be a citizen of the United States; next, he must be a free white man. I want you to understand that although I am going to talk about negroes presently, I am for a white man's government, [cheers,] and in favor of free white qualified voters controlling this country, without regard to negroes. [Continued cheering.] Next, the voter must have been in the county six months immediately preceding the day of election. Then if we were to say in addition, before you can vote, you must take an oath something like the following:

I solemnly swear, that I will henceforth support the Constitution of the United States, and defend it against the assaults of all its enemies; that I will hereafter be, and conduct myself as a true and faithful citizen of the United States, freely and voluntarily claiming to be subject to all the duties and obligations, and entitled to all the rights and privileges of such citizenship; that I ardently desire the suppression of the present insurrection and rebellion against the Government of the United States, the success of its armies and the defeat of all those who oppose them, and that the

Constitution of the United States, and all laws and proclamations made in pursuance thereof, may be speedily and permanently established and enforced over all the people, States and Territories thereof; and further, that I will hereafter heartily aid and assist all loyal people in the accomplishment of these results. So help me God.

Is there any one, Union at heart, who can object to taking an oath like this? [A voice—"None."] Is there a solitary Union man who cannot take this oath? [Voices, "no, no."] Is there any Union man but what would take great pleasure in coming before the judges of election and take this oath to test him who has been warring against his country? You put him to the test, you don't come up asking pardon, but are only giving evidence of being a loyal and a qualified voter. These are simply the qualifications of a voter. On the other hand, if there is anybody in this large assembly of voters who needs and desires a pardon or amnesty, whether he seeks it in good faith or for the purpose of saving a little remnant of negro or any other property, I would say to him, "Go over there; there is an altar for you. There is President Lincoln's altar if you want pardon or amnesty—if petitioning to the President for executive clemency. If you want to escape the penalties you have incurred by violations of law and the constitution, go over there and get your pardon. We are not in need of it; we wish not to take that oath; that is the oath for him who has committed crime." Now, gentlemen, it seems to me this will be fair. We want a hard oath—a tight oath—as a qualification for everybody that votes. He that wants pardon must take the oath prescribed by the President of the United States: and I am free to say that I think the President has been exceedingly lenient in permitting them to do that. If this will not do, will you suggest something that will be better? What standard will you erect? Don't stand here and find fault with my suggestions and say they will not do; but suggest others that are better and more acceptable. I am for a rule that will test a loyal man as against a disloyal one; that is the rule I am for. I am free to say to you that I believe there are many even in the Confederate army, many who have deserted, and even some captured, who I believe are honest and loyal to-day and regret that they have ever been involved in this infamous, diabolical and damnable rebellion. I have had men come before me who evinced, by their emotions and the tone of their voice, that they were as much opposed to the rebellion as I am. If this be so, and they are now willing to support the con-

stitution, and fight in vindication of it, as far as I am concerned, I am willing to admit them and give them a fair chance to return. We cannot put all in prison; we can't suspend all upon the gallows. No, this is not a war of extermination, but a war for the restoration of Government; and while restoring the Government, if we reclaim honest men we have only done our duty.

If we want to restore the government we must start at the foundation. Having elected our squires, constables, sheriffs and other county officers, as we can get men to serve, we have got the groundwork laid. Then what will you do next? Now mark: under the 4th clause and IVth article of the Constitution of the United States we have a pledge to secure to the States a republican form of government. To carry out the spirit and letter of the Constitution, as the people are the rightful source of political power, I should say the executive would have the right to invite the people to have a convention to restore government to the people. Then, even looking to the Constitution of the United States, we have a right to call a convention, and have the convention as a means flowing from the constitution to guarantee the restoration of a republican form of government. We find in the constitution of this State that you can amend the constitution by the legislature, but it takes about six years to amend it in that way. But when we recur to the bill of rights, which is a paramount part of our State Constitution, we find that the sovereign people have the right to alter, amend or abolish their form of government whenever they think proper, and in their own way. This is perfectly consonant to the Constitution of the United States, and admits the great principle that all political power is inherent in the people.

I have unfortunately or fortunately, as the case may be, always been one of those who hold that all power is inherent in the people, and that the Government is made for the people instead of the people being made for the Government; as much so, at least, as the shoe is made for the foot, instead of the foot being made for the shoe. Government emanates from the people; and now, when your Government has been paralyzed or its functions suspended, is there any better way that can be adopted than to call a convention here? In other words: let us have the sovereign present in the shape of delegates; or, were it practicable, to appear in a large amphitheatre, and know what their opinions were in taking the steps to restore the workings of government; I would say let the people be convened in obedience to the Constitution of the United States and of the State,

and in strict compliance with the fundamental principles of our Government, that power is inherent in the people. Who dare say the convention shall not assemble? Who dare say that the people shall not assemble in convention? I know there is a little croaking dissatisfaction among some that have been nominally Union men, and some that have been Rebels in this hell-born and hell-bound rebellion, who, now that they are subjugated, after having been instrumental in paralyzing to some extent the Government, and after having helped to produce the rebellion, hypocritically say: Oh! they don't want so much disturbance;—it will be too revolutionary to have a convention; it will not do to trust the people with the settlement of this great question. Let us think. Give me your attention, and I will show you that there is a cat in the meal. They turn to the Constitution as it now stands, and say, let us get the Legislature back here; let us patch up things and have no fuss. They think of that little clause in our Constitution which provides that the Legislature shall not emancipate slaves without the consent of their owners. Don't you see? Then if they get the Legislature back under the Constitution as it is, they think they can hold on to the little remnant of negroes that is left—the disturbing element that has produced all this war. [Applause.] I then say this: Bring the people forward in convention—the source of all power—they that made the Constitution, and let them act upon this important question and upon this momentous occasion. Let us have the people here, and when they assemble in convention—when the sovereign is present, he can do all that the Legislature can, and he can do a great deal more. Have a convention here, and it can put your State upon her legs in eight and forty hours. It could appoint these magistrates, these squires, these sheriffs, all the officers, and carry on the machinery of State to perfection in eight and forty hours. Let the people come forward and speak, and in speaking upon the negro question, my honest convictions are, that they will settle it, and settle it finally.

Now, my countrymen, it is not worth while to try to deceive each other, and thus play a hypocritical part as the soothsayers in olden times: while practicing their deceptions upon the people, when meeting, would always smile in each others faces. I know there is going to be division in Tennessee; and I tell them now, politically speaking, that my sword is unsheathed, and it never is to be returned until I fall, or until this great principle of free government has triumphed. [Cheers.] Now is



the time to settle it. This question of slavery has been the disturbing element in this Government, and the time has come now to settle it. The Rebels commenced the destruction of the Government for the preservation of slavery, and the Government is putting down the rebellion, and in the preservation of its own existence has put slavery down, justly and rightfully, and upon correct principles. It attempted to rise above the Government, and had it succeeded, negroes or their masters would have controlled the Government; but in making the attempt to control the Government, the mighty car of State has moved forward, and the institution has been crushed, and thank God for it. [Applause.]

But in this connection I have got a single word to say in reference to the brave and gallant men of Tennessee who have entered the service of their country. Is there any one who would like to deprive them of the elective franchise? [A voice—"No."] Mr. Lincoln has done no such thing. He will not require these fifteen thousand heroic soldiers, who have been fighting the battles of their country, and of themselves constitute more than one-tenth of our voting population, to stand before him as petitioners for pardon and amnesty. I know his high appreciation of loyal men, of justice and right too well for this. I opposed his coming into power. I spoke and voted against him, and though I did this and in favor of another, I believe Abraham Lincoln is an honest man, and has done, and is doing, all in his power to preserve this Government and put down this infernal rebellion. [Applause.] Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. I believe Mr. Lincoln is a patriot and a friend to his Government; I believe he is for free Government, and so believing, I shall stand by him. It is easy to find fault—to complain; but the next question comes up, who would have done better than he has done? [Renewed applause.] He is the last man in the United States that would wish to circumscribe the privileges of the brave men of Tennessee in the matter of the elective franchise. Is there a Tennessean here to-night, though he may have differed with me heretofore, who ever doubted me upon this question of free government? In an election for members of a convention or for county officers, how easy will it be for every Tennessee soldier, if he can hear who the candidates are in his district, to vote for the man of his choice wherever he may be stationed? Whether in Middle, or East, or West Tennessee, his voice can be heard and his weight goes into the ballot box in the settlement of this great question. That is the manner in which I want it

settled. And when it comes to repelling and driving back the Rebel armies, then let him have on his whole armor—put on his shield and lock shield with his comrades, and never return till victory perches upon his standard. Who wants to deprive the army from Tennessee of the right to participate in the restoration of their Government? Will anybody make that allegation against me? Since this rebellion commenced, who has been hunted, persecuted, denounced, and calumniated by the Rebels? There is not one among the army of Tennesseans but what knows that I would make any and every sacrifice by which their interest could be promoted. No, no; who ever dreamed or thought of their being deprived or participating at the ballot-box—they who have done so much for the restoration of the State?

Now upon this negro question, and I know the saying is sometimes bandied about that you are always prating and saying the negro is dead—if he is dead, why repeat it so often? Is there a man here that has observed this thing who does not know that the institution of slavery in Tennessee is dead? I have had some come to me and say, "Gov. Johnson, are you in favor of immediate emancipation?" I tell them yes. "Do you want to turn the negroes all loose upon the country? What will we do with them?" Why sir, I reply, as far as emancipation is concerned, that has already taken place. Where are your negroes? They answer, "They are running about somewhere." I ask, what do you call that? [Laughter.] They seem to be already turned loose. The institution of slavery is turned into a traveling institution, and goes just where it pleases. It is said the negroes are not qualified to be free; because they have been slaves so long they are unfitted to be freemen, and shall not be permitted to enjoy the privileges of freemen; but by way of making them competent, it is proposed to keep them in slavery nineteen or twenty years longer. In the first place it would not do to have them free, because they have been slaves, and in the next place they should be kept in slavery to qualify them for freemen. [Laughter.]

We were proceeding to put up the State government—to elect clerks, justices, trustees, legislature, Governor and other things, that constituted the State heretofore. But the institution of slavery. There it lies; will you take it back? Leave out the disturbing element I say. It is now out; and to put the State in motion, start the machinery and leave negroes out of the question. [Applause.] Then the conclusion is, that in fact negroes are emancipated in Tennessee to-day, and the only remaining question for us to settle, as pro-

dent and wise men, is in assigning the negro his new relation. Now, what will that be? There are no more negroes to-day than there were yesterday—there being no more negroes free than there were slaves. The same space will contain them in one condition as in another, and the slaveholder need not be alarmed with the fear that negroes will be increased faster than they were before. Then the negro will be thrown upon society, governed by the same laws that govern communities, and be compelled to fall back upon his own resources, as all other human beings are. The God of Nature has endowed him with faculties that enable him to enjoy the result of his own labor. Political freedom means liberty to work, and at the same time enjoy the product of one's labor, be he white or black, blue or grey, red or green, [laughter] and if he can rise by his own energies, in the name of God let him rise. In saying this, I do not argue that the negro race is equal to the Anglo-Saxon—not at all. There are degrees among white men; some are capable, others are not; some are industrious, others are not; but because we find inferiors among ourselves, shall every inferior man be assigned to slavery? If the negro is better fitted for the inferior condition of society, the laws of nature will assign him there. My own conviction is, that in less than five years after this question is settled upon the principle of hired labor, the negro's labor will be more productive than it ever was.

The argument used to be that "Cotton is King." But I think that idea is pretty well exploded. [Laughter.] For a little experience has proven that cotton is a feeble King without the protection of the United States. I used to tell them that bread and meat were King, and if we look over in rebeldom now, we will find that a little bread and meat would be more acceptable than cotton. [Renewed laughter.]

I hope the negro will be transferred to Mexico, or some other country congenial to his nature, where there is not that difference in class or distinction, in reference to blood or color. If in the settlement of this question the providence of God should call a number of them there, I say let them go. And about that time I would not care much to see a large portion of our gallant sons go along to Mexico, too, [Cheers,] and as they approach the city of Mexico or Jalapa, of which Louis Napoleon has taken possession, where he was going to send Prince Maximilian to govern, I would like our boys to be along there inquiring into that affair, and give him to understand that while we can fight for years and head a monstrous re-

billion to boot, he cannot come upon this continent to establish a government anti-republican in its character. We have not yet fulfilled our mission. We have got the negroes to dispose of. We will do that. And we have got other things to do. We should teach France and all other powers that we can crush down a gigantic rebellion at home, and that the combined armies of the world cannot subdue the United States when united. [Loud cheers.] I care not though all nations were arrayed against us in one solid phalanx. When the masses of the people of these United States stand united we can bid defiance to the combined powers of earth.

Let us go on in the performance of the great mission of restoring these States. And I fully concur in the doctrine I heard advanced here to-night, that a State cannot commit suicide—a State cannot destroy itself—a State has no right to go out of this Union, and the Federal Government has no right to put one out. None. The doctrine is as dangerous on one hand as on the other. If you accept either, your Government is destroyed and crumbles into pieces like a rope of sand, by its own weight. These States occupy a certain relation to the great whole, and the great whole to each part. The parts cannot destroy the whole, neither can the whole destroy the parts. It is undeniable: there is no way to destroy a State. We find in the Constitution that you can make States, create a Government, but there is no way to destroy it. I repudiate the doctrine *in toto*. It is contrary to the Government of our fathers—an emanation of Divinity—and we fail to discharge our duty, and commit as great a sin and error in permitting the destruction of this Government in that way, as though we had raised our sacrilegious hands to tear it down.

Though it was not my intention to speak on this occasion, in conclusion of what I have said, I am free to declare that I am for a Convention, after adopting some rule that will exclude disloyal and admit only loyal men. Under the Constitution, the people have a right to meet and appoint delegates. On the other hand, the President of the United States, through his agent, has the right by proclamation to say to the people: "On such a day elect so many delegates to take into consideration the restoration of the State." As I remarked before, sometimes we may do irregular things for the sake of returning to law and order. It might be irregular in starting, but when the Convention get together, they have the right to change, alter, or abolish their government in their own way. I am disposed to think that

the people, if they were together, would be inclined to remove the difficulties under which we labor. I am willing to trust them. I believe they are honest, and especially so in reference to governmental affairs. And even judging men by self-interest, I am willing to trust them, because it is their interest to have the best government they can get, and they will have it. I do not see why a Convention could not be trusted as well as a Legislature. Who is prepared here to night to hesitate to admit the great principle that man is capable of governing himself? Have any of you reached that point? If you have, you had better go down and join Jeff. Davis; that is the locality for you. [Laughter.] And now I am going to tell you a truth, and you know what I say is true: If there are any here who have lived in the county of Davidson, you know many men have been afraid and alarmed even to speak upon the negro question when the large slaveholders were about. Some of you have been deprived of your manhood so long upon this question, that when you begin to talk about it now, you look around to see if you are not overheard by some of your old masters. [Laughter.]

In 1843, when I was a candidate for Governor, it was said, "That fellow Johnson is a demagogue—an abolitionist"—because I advocated a white basis for representation—apportioning members of Congress according to the number of qualified voters, instead of embracing negroes. I discussed the question alone, scarcely getting a paper to come to my support; and hundreds agreeing with me, sought me in private to give me comfort, but were afraid to strike openly. I know all about this negro question, and pardon me if I seem to be egotistical when I say that I am the only man that has dared at all times to discuss it in this State; and now some of you see what I have all along foreshadowed. I have known this question was coming, and that it was only a question of time. Standing alone, having but little means to command, and no press, but simply relying upon argument, with the great mass of the people I was sustained. Running against him who was called the "eagle orator," a lineal descendant from the forest-born Demosthenes, it was expected that I would be driven from the contest; but, thank God, I have always relied upon one thing: that there was a great principle of right lying at the foundation of all things; and that truth is mighty and will prevail. Right goes forward; truth triumphs; justice is paramount; and slavery goes down. [Applause.] And now, I proclaim it, the time has come, being my helper, I am willing to do

my part, and am willing to wind up my political career in the final settlement of this question. The time has come when the tyrant's rod shall be broken, and the captive set free. [Renewed applause.] Then, now is the time to strike; and he is a coward who desires to remain inactive and will not come forward to that altar and worship. [Continued applause.] Yet while right is triumphing, they talk about compromising this question. Compromise! Compromise with what? Compromise a great principle! Will you have truth to compromise with falsehood? Will you have right to compromise with wrong? Will you have virtue compromise with vice? I say, No. In the compromise of right with wrong, right is the loser; in the compromise of virtue with vice, virtue is always violated. Deity might as well have compromised with the devil, who was the first rebel, and made war in heaven. No compromise. None. No compromise with traitors while they have arms in their hands. [Cheers.] I am no maniac or fanatic upon this question, but I feel devoted, attached and wedded to great principles. Sometimes I inquire in my own mind why this people have had no leader. Peter the Hermit led the crusade, but was wild and visionary, yet he intended to redeem the Holy Land. The Crusaders had their leader; the Israelites had their leader; the Greeks had their leader; the Romans had their leader, and England had her leader. The Israelites had their Moses, and have this people got no Moses—no leader—or have they to rely for their deliverance upon the establishment of this great principle? The ways of Providence are incomprehensible to short-sighted, erring man. In the various periods of the world's history there have been manifestations of a power incomprehensible to us, and I believe that there is a direct and important connection between the moral and physical world, and the one is affected more or less by the other in bringing about great events. Going back to the history of the world, we find events and signs have preceded final results. This nation, many think, has been involved in a great sin. Nations as well as individuals must sooner or later be overtaken for their transgressions. Perhaps this rebellion will result in great good; the nation will become chastened and the sin removed. Who can tell? When we go back to ancient times and run over the pages of history, what do we find there? We find Pharaoh, after governing the Egyptians with an iron rod so many years, there was a rebellion there; the people were led by Moses to the shores of the Red Sea, when by the touch of his rod the waters parted and stood as a wall on either side, and Moses and his follow-



ers passed through dry-shod and reached the land of Canaan; whilst Pharaoh and his chariots and mighty hosts proceeded to follow on and were lost amid the waves, and were drowned in the sea. I do not say that this was a direct or special interposition of Providence; I will not undertake to argue that it was the result of a divine law. I refer to it as a great fact that Pharaoh and his hosts were lost in the Red Sea in pursuit of those trying to escape from bondage. If disposed, I might take you back to Babylon and there look at her people in their might, or to those mighty walls crowded with chariots. Those walls have crumbled; Babylon has gone down, and is no more. I will not say whether it was the result of a special providence, or of a general law, but I state it as a great fact. Some great wrong or some great sin had to be redressed. I might take you back to ancient Tyre, in the days of her freedom and splendor; but all her glories are no more, and her ruins are used only as a resort for straggling fishermen to dry their nets upon the rocks. I might take you back to Herod, in the days of all his pomp and splendor, when, on one occasion, he appeared before the people, and they stood amazed and exclaimed, "He speaks not as a man, but as God." But he was smitten by the Almighty, and eaten by worms. I will not say whether these were special interpositions of Providence or the results of a Divine law, but they are great facts. I might call attention to the journey of Saul of Tarsus to Damascus, when he was struck blind, as believed by some, on account of his persecutions of the Christians. But I will not say whether that was the result of a special interposition of Divine providence, or of a general law, but it is a great fact. I might take you to Jerusalem, and tell of the persecution by the Jews of Christ, and his crucifixion upon the cross, and now their dispersion to all parts of the globe. I will not assume that it was an interposition of Divine providence, or the result of a general law, but it is a great fact, and the Jews have been dispersed and rebuked. There are many ways in which the Almighty manifests his power. He sometimes unlocks the winds, and rends the forests, and strands whole navies upon the hidden rocks and desert shores. Sometimes He manifests His power in the forked lightning's glare, and sometimes His mutterings are heard in distant though threatening peals of thunder. Sometimes He lets one comet loose, which sweeps from one extreme of the universe to the other, shaking from its fiery tail pestilence and death. There are

"Signs sent by God to mark the will of Heaven—  
Signs which bid nations weep and be forgiven."

Does not the mind irresistibly come to the conclusion that this great sin must be gotten clear of, or result in the overthrow and destruction of this nation? I say, then, remove the evil, obey the laws of Heaven, and always reach a right conclusion. As we have commenced the work of restoring the State, let us profit by past experience, and put the government in motion now upon correct and true principles. Let us go at it honestly. I know there are some that are finding fault and thinking about the plans of State already. We should not be controlled by considerations of this kind. Let us forget that we have been divided into parties; let us commence the work of restoring and building the Government up, and then if we want to quarrel about local questions or questions of expediency, we will have a Government to quarrel in.

I will remark in this connection, that about the beginning of the rebellion, in conversation with Phillip Clayton, Howell Cobb, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, that gentleman said, after we had argued the question pro and con: "Mr. Johnson, it is unnecessary to argue this question further; a large portion of the South is unwilling to submit to the administration of the government by a man who has come up from the ranks as Abraham Lincoln has." And let me tell you, there is a good deal of this feeling and sentiment in the hearts of the leaders of this rebellion, because Abraham Lincoln rose from the masses. Abraham Lincoln is a democrat in principle; he is for the people, and for free government, and so I am for him, [Cheers.] and will stand by him until this rebellion is put down. There are corruptions, of course, in such an immense expenditure. But what is a few millions or billions of dollars, when contrasted with the existence of this Government, and the suppression of this rebellion? What is it contrasted with the life and existence of a great nation which has not fulfilled its mission? It is easy to clamor and to find fault; but let us put the rebellion down, and then, if any body has done wrong, we will have plenty of time to punish offenders.

Gentlemen, I did not come here to speak to-night. My intention was not to participate in the meeting, but I was anxious to see some steps taken which would indicate what you intended to do. If we have correct principles, it does not need previous consultation, and the result will be the triumph of those principles. Then take this great question; it is a question of state—of the existence of free government. Take it and think about it. Turn it over in your minds. Which is the best way? What is the best mode?

shall it be done? I stand where I have always stood, an advocate of free government. I am for the people having a fair, full, impartial trial of their capacity for self government, and I have confidence that they will triumph. And if these brave officers and gallant men, with what aid we can give them, will keep the rebel army from us, or drive them in the Gulf, (as I believe ere long they will,) before they reach the Gulf, Tennessee will "stand redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled by the genius of universal emancipation." Let those of us who are for restoring the government and leaving out this element called slavery, stand together, and in language often repeated, let us give a long pull, a strong pull and a pull altogether, and the union sentiment and free government will succeed. We have commenced the battle of freedom—it is freedom's battle,—and let me say it is not extended to the negro only, for this will free more white men than it will black men. I know what I say. There are men owning slaves themselves that will be emancipated by this operation. It is not my devotion to the black man alone, but a greater devotion to the white men and the amelioration of their condition. My humanity is broad enough for the white and the black man too. We have commenced the battle of freedom, and—

"Freedom's battle, once begun,  
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,  
Though baffled oft, 's ever won!"

Make high and strong resolves; let your principles go forth to the world, and, though slave owners and negro-drivers, though hell stand yawning before you, go forward with the banner of Freedom and Free Government; pass the fiery cross around, and Freedom will ere long triumph, and the triumph, I hope, will last for all time.

Here in Tennessee, some say, "Oh, I am afraid of the slavery question!" They are so afraid of doing wrong that they are afraid to do right. Many yet are so afraid of their former masters, they still look around to see whether Mr. Bell, Mr. Overton, or the Ewings are standing about. It is time, when talking about restoring slavery, to restore manhood. They know many of them have that taken from them which constitutes a man—their manhood has been emasculated. Get your consent that you have manhood enough to stand up here and take hold of the helm of State, and convince us that you are willing to do it. Let us commence the work this night. The shackles must fall from the limbs of all. You must have laws for the punishment and protection of all. Law is what we want. There is no man without law. As an ancient Greek

has said, "The love of law is the soul of liberty." We must have law, and whether the black man is here or not, we must have government. There will be no difficulty about this question. I don't care if the negroes go to Africa or any other place more suitable to them—we can make more cotton after they are gone than has ever been made in the United States before. If you cut up these large cotton farms into small sized farms, each man with his little family getting hold of part of it, on good land will raise his own hogs, his own sheep, beef cattle, his own grain, and a few bales of cotton, better handled, and a much better article than we have ever had heretofore. With a greater number of individuals, each making a few bales, we will have more bales than ever were made before. And in addition to that, if the cotton-plant was lost, the world would not stop, for the vacuum would be filled by making a little more silk, wool, hemp and flax, and in a little while you would never know that cotton had been in the world. [Laughter.] It is all an idea, that the world can't get along without cotton. And as is suggested by my friend behind me, whether we attain perfection in the raising of cotton or not, I think we ought to stimulate the cultivation of hemp, [renewed laughter,] for we ought to have more of it, and a far better material, a stronger fibre with which to make a stronger rope. For, not to be malicious or malignant, I am free to say, that many who were driven into this rebellion, I believe are repentant, but I say of the leaders, the instigators, the conscious, intelligent traitors, they ought to be hung. [Cheers and applause.] Treason must be made odious, traitors must be punished and impoverished. Their social power must be destroyed, and the effects that give them power and influence must be taken away. I trust the time will come, when the Union men who have been oppressed, and the loyal heirs of those who have perished on the battle field, or starved in the mountains, will, to some extent, be remunerated out of the property of those who betrayed and tried to destroy their country. Common sense teaches that the transgressor should make restitution. What the common sense of every man suggests is but common justice.

This would not be considered a very politic electioneering speech, but I am no candidate for anything. I know some say that when traitors become numerous enough, then treason becomes respectable. I want that class hung to test their respectability. [Cheers.] Fellow-citizens, I must say in conclusion, [cries of "go on,"] that I am very much gratified to find



that there has been no dissension here to-night as far as I have observed. I am proud to say that I have not seen the slightest indication of prejudice or dissension. The resolutions as adopted, as I understand them, I think will cover the whole ground, and if we carry out these resolutions I think we can succeed in accomplishing the end sought for. I am also proud and gratified to see so many

here participating in this meeting. Let it go to the country as an earnest of what is going to follow. Things must have a beginning, and you have put the ball in motion. I repeat, that I feel proud and more than gratified at this demonstration, and in conclusion, tender you my sincere thanks for your marked attention to this crude and desultory speech.

## RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE MEETING.

WHEREAS, — A portion of the people of Tennessee, having united in the rebellion inaugurated by the Gulf States against the Government of the United States, for the purpose of establishing a Southern Confederacy; and,

WHEREAS, Slavery was the disturbing element which enabled wicked men to combine and delude the people into the commission of a great crime against their prosperity, their civil institutions, civilization and humanity; and,

WHEREAS, the rebellion thus inaugurated has prostrated all the civil institutions of our State, laid waste our fair inheritance, swept off the harvests and habitations of the husbandman and the works of the artizan, consumed and destroyed the internal improvements of the States, squandered the public treasury and the School Fund provided for the education of the poor, borne off the youth and manhood of the State who have fallen in battle, or survive in poverty and suffering; and,

WHEREAS, It has broken up society from its foundation, given loose rein to the wildest passions, severed the dearest domestic ties, and introduced anarchy and crime, unchecked by the salutary restraints of law; in a word, all the best interests of our beloved State lie in ruins; and wretchedness, poverty, terror, and alarm prevail, and are apparent everywhere. At such an hour as this, when broken hearted mothers, bereaved widows, and destitute orphans, cry out deliverance, cold must his heart be who is not ready to do all his duty, and to make whatever sacrifice necessary to free the State from the present evils, and as this only can be done by the restoration and permanent establishment of a free government, under the guarantees, and in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the United States; Therefore,

Resolved, That we recognize the authority and the duty of the Executive of the United States, or such agents and instruments as he may constitutionally appoint and employ in

co-operation with the Legislative and Judicial departments of the Government, to secure to the loyal people of any State of the United States the constitutional guarantee of a republican form of government

2. *Resolved*, That the people, being the rightful source of all power of government, the welfare of the people of Tennessee will be best secured by committing the restoration and permanent establishment of civil government to a Constitutional Convention, to be chosen by the loyal citizens of the State; and having implicit confidence in the integrity of the Hon. Andrew Johnson, Military Governor of the State, we submit that he may call such a Convention at any time when, in his judgment, the State may be represented from all her parts

3. *Resolved*, That as slavery was the cause of all our troubles, and as it is an unmitigated evil in itself; and since it may be considered dead by the acts of its own friends, that it may never be resurrected, to enable a small minority to bring the ruin upon our children that it has upon us; we here pledge ourselves to use all our influence to elect such men, and only such men, as delegates to said Convention, as shall be in favor of immediate and universal emancipation now and for ever. And we invite our fellow citizens everywhere to unite with us on this platform, and thus use the opportune moment to free ourselves and our posterity from the bondage in which we have been so long enslaved by the influence of an arrogant doomineering aristocracy.

4. *Resolved*, That on the call of said Convention, it shall consist of delegates duly elected from the respective Senatorial and Representative districts under the last constitutional apportionment.

(Signed)

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| W. J. COCHRANE, | } Cor |
| WM. R. TRACY,   |       |
| D. D. DICKEY,   |       |
| JOHN W. BOWEN,  |       |
| E. R. GLASCOCK. | } Sec |



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